

National Office
2717 Wentz Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask.
S7K 4B6
Tel (306) 652-9465
Fax (306) 664-6226
E-Mail: nfu@nfu.ca



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Government Fails in Bid to Steal CWB Elections —Huge Victory for Farmers

The results of the 2008 Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Director elections have been announced. Four of the five successful candidates are strong supporters of the CWB's single desk marketing advantage. Of the ten elected farmers on the Board of Directors, 8 now support the CWB's advantages and 2 do not.

“This is a huge victory for farmers,” says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU). “Farmers have stood up to Harper’s vow to “walk over” any opposition to his plan to demolish the CWB. With 80% of the farmer-elected Board members supporting the single desk marketing advantages and a strong role for the CWB, it is time for the Conservative Party to back away from its attacks on the CWB. Farmers have spoken, and if the Prime Minister believes in the will of the majority he must now stop attacking the CWB, and the Prime Minister must also protect the CWB at the World Trade Organization talks.”

The failed steps taken by Harper to steal the elections from farmers are as follows:

1. July 2008—Stephen Harper vows to “walk over” CWB supporters.
2. July 23, 2008—the Minister of Agriculture sends a secret letter to the CWB instructing the CWB to remove about 1/3 of the farmer-voters from the voters’ list. This action is being challenged by the Friends of the CWB in Federal Court.
3. August, 2008—the Minister of Agriculture changes the CWB regulations and removes the spending limits on third party interveners during the election period.
4. September, 2008 —the Minister of Agriculture sends a letter and ballot application to farmers/ranchers in western Canada encouraging non-permit book holders to vote. The application sent out by the Minister will not work for farmers that hold a CWB permit book but have been removed from the voters’ list.

5. September/October, 2008 —the ballot application posted on the election Coordinator (MNP)’s website will not work for farmer permit book holders that want to get back on the voters’ list.
6. November, 2008---Several Conservative MPs directly contravene the Code of Ethics for MPs by sending campaign-style letters directly to farmers from their offices in Ottawa:
 - Conservative MPs abuse their “franking” privileges granted by Parliament by using taxpayers’ money to advertise on behalf of individual candidates. As well, the Conservative MPs refuse to register as third party interveners as required by the CWB Act of 1998, making a mockery of election regulations.
 - Lastly, the Conservative MPs have likely contravened the Privacy Act of 1983 and the CWB Act of 1998 by using the confidential information from the election voters list to directly contact farmers and tell them how to vote.

“The NFU wishes to thank all the candidates who put their names forward, as well as the farmers that took the interest and the time to vote.

Over the past three years, the Harper government’s actions toward farmers and the CWB have been both undemocratic and un-Canadian,” concluded Wells, “but farmers have not been bullied by the threats from Stephen Harper. The NFU will continue to work toward a positive outcome for farmers and the marketing advantages they receive from the Canadian Wheat Board.”

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For more information contact:
Stewart Wells 306-773-6852, 306-741-7694